

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Natalia Juscinska. I am an independent living advocate at Access Independence in Stratford, CT. I am a recent graduate of The University of Scranton and I have cerebral palsy. Centers for Independent Living have played a critical role in my life for a long time. When I was young the Centers provided my parents with information and resources that facilitated several home modifications including installation of a ramp and alterations in the bathrooms. When I was in the process of applying to colleges the centers helped me identify campuses that were suitable for individuals with mobility advocated for some reasonable accommodations that would allow me to succeed in the classroom. As a result I was able to take a full time course load with minimal assistance.

The Centers also connected me with the office of vocational rehabilitation that helped to fund my studies through scholarships. I graduated Cum Laude in the Honors program this past May. My college experience and transition away from home would have been challenging without the aid of Independent Living Centers. I am currently still working with the office of vocational rehabilitation to obtain a drivers license and modified vehicle. The Centers for Independent Living across the state are a crucial resource for all individuals with disabilities but particularly important to young people with disabilities. Transitions into studies and adult life can be difficult if the individual does not have the appropriate resources or support network. The Centers for independent living helped me to navigate the challenges of living with a disability and removed many of the functional barriers to a successful life. I strongly urge you to continue your support of the centers for independent living in Connecticut and restore their full funding of \$528,000 so that generations of individuals with disabilities may continue to lead productive lives.

Respectfully,

Natalia Juscinska

Advocate

Access Independence, INC.

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